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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [ET](#) [SO](#) [KE](#) [ER](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN FM HAILS COOPERATION, BUT SEEKS LOWER  
U.S. MILITARY PROFILE, IN SOMALIA

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 80  
[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 40  
[1](#)C. 06 ADDIS ABABA 2093 (NOTAL)  
[1](#)D. ADDIS ABABA 72 (NOTAL)

Classified By: ERIC WONG, DEPUTY POLITICAL-ECONOMIC COUNSELOR. REASONS  
: 1.4 (A), (B), AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. In a January 11 meeting with Ambassador, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin expressed appreciation for U.S. military cooperation and U.S. political support of its intervention in Somalia, saying that Somalia was "a common challenge" that could not be addressed unilaterally. Reviewing recent discussions with Somalia's TFG, FM Seyoum said TFG President Yusuf did not favor impeaching dissident Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, despite pressure from TFG parliamentarians to do so. Seyoum reiterated Ethiopia's request for Title I food aid for Ethiopia's urban poor, noting that the "enormous cost" of military operations in Somalia was "draining" Ethiopia's resources. While deeply appreciative of bilateral cooperation in support of Ethiopia's military operations and efforts to promote regional stability, Foreign Minister Seyoum underscored the need for the U.S. to minimize any visible military role in Somalia, so as to allay fears of potential troop-contributing countries to peace-keeping contingents in support of IGASOM. Seyoum reported that Kenyan FM Tuju was leading one of several Kenyan delegations aimed at lobbying African countries to deploy to Somalia, and underscored Ethiopia's request to the United States to pressure Kenya to expedite the handover to the TFG of senior Eritrean military commanders captured in Somalia, as well as other foreign fighters. (NOTE: Foreign Minister Seyoum's comments on defense relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will be reported septel. END NOTE.) END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador and deputy pol-econ counselor (note-taker) met January 11 with Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, who was accompanied by Acting Director-General of the MFA's Europe and America General Directorate Ms. Almaz Amha and a note-taker from the MFA's Cabinet Office of the Minister. Expressing appreciation for U.S. military cooperation and U.S. support of its intervention in Somalia, FM Seyoum said Ethiopia recognized that Somalia was "a common challenge" that could not be addressed unilaterally, and sought to convey this to the international community.

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ETHIOPIA AGREES IMPEACHMENT OF TFG SPEAKER SHOULD BE DELAYED  
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¶3. (C) Ambassador requested that the GOE advocate to the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) that dissident Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan not be impeached, and underscore the TFG's need to focus on political outreach. In response, FM Seyoum said Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles had discussed the issue at length with TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf. President Yusuf and other TFG leaders had lost confidence in the Speaker, Seyoum said, and were "genuinely convinced" that Sharif had been in direct contact with Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) hard-liners including CIC Executive Committee Chairman Sheikh Sharif Ahmed and CIC Consultative Committee Chairman Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys. The TFG also believed that the Speaker had been involved in the assassination attempt against TFG principals (ref C), as well as the subsequent flight from Mogadishu of a female parliamentarian suspected of complicity. Nevertheless, Seyoum said, the TFG had been advised to delay any prosecution or impeachment of the Speaker, despite pressure from TFG parliamentarians to impeach him now. Seyoum assessed that TFG President Yusuf did not favor impeaching the Speaker, but added that the Baidoa-based Speaker had a weakening political base, and may require guarantees of protection before agreeing to rejoin the TFG in Mogadishu. The GOE would continue advising the TFG not to push for the Speaker's impeachment, Seyoum said, even though he had "done a lot of damage."

¶4. (C) Reviewing USG engagement with the EU, AU, and potential African troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to build support for the prompt deployment of an international

peace-keeping force in Somalia (IGASOM), Ambassador observed that the USG was working hard to support IGASOM, including pushing the EU to disperse 15 million Euros earmarked for Somalia from the EU's African Peace Facility fund. The USG was also working on delivering "high-visibility, high-impact" humanitarian assistance to Somalia (e.g., food aid), as Prime Minister Meles had suggested (ref A).

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GUNS OR BUTTER: FOOD AID NEEDED FOR ETHIOPIA'S POOR  
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¶5. (C) Citing a 20 per cent increase in some food prices, Ambassador noted that the USG was reviewing PM Meles' January 4 request to AF A/S Frazer for Title I food aid for urban poor in Ethiopia (refs B, D). Seyoum said the request had resulted from discussions in the GOE's National Security Council, and that he would discuss "in general terms" the economic strain of sustaining military operations in a meeting later in the day with ambassadors from donor countries. The high cost of fuel and other expenses were "draining the resources of the government," Seyoum said. Monetized food aid could generate revenue to promote job creation opportunities, Seyoum added.

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U.S. MILITARY MUST MAINTAIN "LOW PROFILE" IN SOMALIA  
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¶6. (C) FM Seyoum requested that the USG endeavor to keep U.S. military engagement in Somalia at "a low profile," citing concerns among potential African TCCs that media reports of direct U.S. involvement in airstrikes created greater risk of terrorist attacks against peace-keeping contingents. Seyoum recommended that the USG publicly state that it would not conduct any future military operations in Somalia, so as not to "alarm" potential TCCs for Somalia.

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KENYA LOBBYING POTENTIAL TROOP CONTRIBUTORS FOR IGASOM...  
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¶7. (C) Seyoum noted that he had met Kenyan Foreign Minister

Tuju on January 9, in Juba, southern Sudan, on the margins of the commemoration of the second anniversary of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement. According to Seyoum, Kenya was dispatching three separate delegations to lobby nine African countries about contributing troops to IGASOM: FM Tuju was to lead a mission to Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa.

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... BUT MAY RELEASE ERITREAN COMMANDERS ASSISTING THE CIC  
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18. (C) FM Seyoum highlighted Ethiopia's interest in having the Kenyan government expedite the surrender of senior Eritrean military officers in its custody to the TFG, rather than release them for return to Eritrea, and said PM Meles would raise the issue later in the day with Kenyan President Kibaki. Seyoum noted that these officers were senior commanders and international terrorists, who had been "training, organizing, and commanding an international force to destroy the constitutional government in Somalia." Seyoum said that Kenya had planned to charge the foreign fighters only with crossing the border illegally with arms; doing so would provide an opportunity for Eritrea to mount a legal defense for them, and obtain their likely release in days. As of January 9, he said, Eritrean officers and other foreign fighters in Kenyan custody were being held at the provincial

government office at Garissa, in Kenya's North Eastern Province. The Kenyan government had pledged to surrender them to the TFG after interrogation, but the GOE feared that corrupt Kenyan officials would help the Eritrean officers flee to Eritrea, Seyoum said. Asmara had dispatched the GSE Agriculture Minister to Kenya to seek their release, he said.

19. (C) Among those now in Kenyan custody were Eritrean Brigadier General Hadish Ephraim, whom Seyoum said was well-known to Ethiopia for having served at the Assab-Bure front during the 1998-2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea war. Seyoum said

that BG Ephraim had coordinated military operations of the CIC and other foreign fighters in Somalia; a close associate of Eritrean President Isaias, Ephraim had been sent to Somalia to "open another front" with Ethiopia. Seyoum urged the USG to reinforce to Nairobi the need for Kenyan authorities to surrender Ephraim and others to the TFG; allowing them to return to Eritrea would be "very, very damaging" to Ethio-Kenyan relations, Seyoum said. Citing erroneous press reports that Ethiopian aircraft had attacked a Kenyan border post, Ambassador underscored the need for a closer, more formal working relationship among principals from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia's TFG.

110. (C) COMMENT: While deeply appreciative of bilateral cooperation in support of Ethiopia's military operations and efforts to promote regional stability, Foreign Minister Seyoum underscored the need for the U.S. to minimize any visible military role in Somalia, so as allay fears of potential troop contributing countries considering sending peace-keeping contingents in support of IGASOM. U.S. counter-terrorism activities directed against high-value targets must therefore be carefully coordinated with public diplomacy efforts, to ensure they do not deter potential peace-keeping deployments, which are a prerequisite for Ethiopia's withdrawal (ref A). END COMMENT.  
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